
FATHERHOOD ALLIANCE

of Benton and Franklin Counties



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Brandon Gregory - Fatherhood Coordinator, You Medical

"There is a crisis within our nation." We have heard these words so frequently lately, that some have become numb to their meaning and warning. I hope that will not be the case when it comes to father absence. The statistics speak for themselves; a growing number of children are growing up without a father figure in their lives, and that has dramatic impact on our nation and our communities. I believe it is safe to say that we exist within a national crisis of father absence, and we see the effects right here at home.

I am honored to be a part of a group of individuals and organizations who recognize this crisis and work to engage, support, and encourage men in their fathering roles. It is my privilege to introduce to you the Fatherhood Alliance of Benton and Franklin Counties. This alliance is working to collectively impact our local community by increasing father involvement and decreasing father absenteeism through community engagement, community education, and developing resources for dads and the organizations who serve them. This alliance is community driven and open to anyone with a desire to work toward a healthier community through encouraging and supporting fathers!

FATHERHOOD REPORTS

In 2019, Benton-Franklin Health District and You Medical partnered with National Fatherhood Initiative to produce a Needs and Assets assessment on the state of fatherhood in Benton and Franklin Counties. This report can be viewed here or on the BFHD website. A Fatherhood Fact Sheet is also available here on the website.

24/7 DAD

Brandon Gregory - Fatherhood
Coordinator, You Medical

24/7 Dad is an evidence-based fatherhood program, run in a group setting for 12 weeks. At the end of each 12-week cycle, the men of 24/7 Dad are asked "What will you miss most about this group?" Without fail, regardless of background or situation, the men will answer "I will miss seeing these guys every week." As a facilitator, this answer makes perfect sense. I have spent time watching the men in these groups share trauma, emotions, relationships and dad jokes. For 12-weeks, these men have been on a journey together to become the best dads that they could be. When they find our group, some dads are fighting for custody or placement of their children. Others are wishing they could figure out how to talk to the mother of their children after a relationship ended. Still others are wondering "what do I do with this toddler/teenage temper tantrum?" When the dads graduate, they are often bonded together by their commitment to giving their kids their time, their love and their hearts. They are dedicated to being good examples of healthy men; and involved, responsible and committed fathers.



INSIDE/OUT DAD

Brandon Gregory - Fatherhood
Coordinator, You Medical

"As I was growing up, my dad "disciplined" me with extension cords, switches, belts, and fists. Really, whatever he could get his hands on". – Anonymous Inside/Out Dad participant

Sadly, this is not an isolated story. As I lead our discussion on discipline in the Redirection Pod of Benton County Jail, this type of statement is commonplace. The guys will continue to tell me that their their own fathers' methods of discipline led them to fight back. Sometimes this meant a physical altercation, sometimes it meant running to substances to dull the pain, and sometimes it meant running away. Whatever their fighting-back looked like, they often associate "discipline" with "abuse", and they have vowed to never do this to their kids!

As we unpack the term discipline, which means "to teach and to guide", participants will often mutter something like, "I wish someone told me this years ago." Unfortunately, boys and men are often not taught what it means to be a man, what a healthy relationship looks like or how to father. According to fatherhood research, lack of positive father-child interaction increases the likelihood that children will spend time in jail, abuse substance or experience abuse or neglect (Father Facts 8). This is why we run fatherhood groups like Inside/Out Dad.

Inside/Out Dad is an evidence-based fatherhood program implemented with incarcerated fathers, and shown to break the cycle of incarceration and reduce recidivism by giving fathers the tools they need to become more involved, responsible and committed in the lives of their children.

RISE UP

Patrick Luce - Juvenile Justice Center

Since June of 2018, intentional conversations in RISE UP have kicked off early mornings for young boys in custody at The Juvenile Justice Center. While sharing breakfast, staff, volunteers and youth sit together and discuss topics around masculinity. They are encouraged to chew on questions such as 'What does it mean to be a man?'

During one RISE UP session, a group of four boys discovered they all had something in common - growing up without a father figure in their homes, and never knowing their biological fathers. The conversation led to each expressing a desire to one day be a father. One of these boys was asked how he could be a good father if he has never been raised by a good father. His response was priceless! Without hesitation, he confidently exclaimed "I will be there!"

During Rise Up, the boys are provided a safe place to express their pain, in addition to their hopes and dreams! They are encouraged to seek support and take healthy risks that will one day lead to healthy relationships with significant others and their own children. The boys want a better life, and desire a loving father who will be there!



R.E.E.L PREVENTION

Zac Shileika - Domestic Violence Services of Benton & Franklin Counties

It is important for boys and young men to have positive male role models in their lives, who teach and model healthy relationships and views on masculinity. Unfortunately, many boys and young men are growing up without a father-figure or positive male role model in their lives.

R.E.E.L (Respect.Empowerment.Equality.Love) Prevention delivers evidence-based programs to youth in Benton and Franklin counties, with the goal of preventing unhealthy relationships and violence. These programs offer youth a safe and neutral space to talk about what's going on in their lives, and encourage them to confront negative social norms that contribute to unhealthy relationships.

Throughout the program, participants gain skills in social/emotional intelligence, resiliency and trust. Youth who have gone through the programs show improvement in behavior, academics and communication. Currently, 40% of youth in our community report not having a trusted adult to talk to, and 38% feel that they do not have a positive family support system.

One in 10 teens in our community report that they have been purposefully hurt by a partner. R.E.E.L has several different presentations that work to prevent violence including healthy relationship presentations as well as in their shoes, which allows participants to walk in the lives of youth who have been abused by someone they love. Violence is 100% preventable....our services are 100% free.

FUN FALL ACTIVITIES FOR DADS AND KIDS

Vanessa McCollum - Benton-Franklin Health District

The weather is getting colder, but the end of Summer doesn't have to mean the end of outdoor fun! Here are some great Fall activities you can plan with your kids:

1. Hiking - The Tri-Cities area has some great, family-friendly hiking trails! For a list of hiking trails in the area, visit: <http://hiketricities.com/hikes/>.
2. Nature Walk - if you're not up for a full-fledged hike, try a shorter nature walk in your neighborhood. Kids can collect leaves, acorns and other Fall "treasures" along the way.
3. Fall Art - use glue or tape to help kids make Fall collages out of the "treasures" they find on hikes or nature walks.
4. Campfire and s'mores - make or buy a fire pit for the backyard, and help kids make delicious s'mores!
5. Backyard Football Game - Fall is the perfect time to get outside and play a game of football, catch or even just good old-fashioned "tag".
6. Visit the Pumpkin Patch - Here is a list of local pumpkin patches.
7. Rake Leaves - make this a fun chore by getting the whole family involved. Make sure to take time to jump in the leaf piles, make "leaf angels" and take lots of hot chocolate breaks.
8. Country Drive - the colors of Fall are beautiful, and kids love them. Take a drive through the country, and point out all the different colors and sights of the season. Car rides are an especially good time to get older kids or teens to open up and talk.

